

## More active participants wanted



Janet Elliott at home in her garden

The RA's new chairman Janet Elliott aims to encourage more residents to take part in the work of the RA and thus in the life of the Suburb community. She says she joined the association as soon as she and her husband John moved on to the Suburb in 1994 and finds it 'surprising that, although I know we have a very high membership, so many people don't join'. It is a subject close to Janet's heart because she has been an exemplary Membership Secretary for five years. "I saw an appeal in Suburb News for someone to do the job and it seemed to be something I would enjoy and could do while looking after my husband who was becoming increasingly unwell."

Janet's career has taken her from being a young recruit in the

promotions department at Mirror Newspapers, followed by a move upmarket to Conde Nast, to Deputy Chief Officer at the The Business Education Council and a director of City & Guilds of the London Institute. The publishing jobs were followed by the birth of a daughter and son after which Janet restarted her education at the LSE where she gained a BSc Econ and an MSc in Public Administration.

On leaving LSE she started teaching in further education and working part time for the The Open University. She was invited to become one of the 24 members of the newly created Business Education Council, a Margaret Thatcher initiative which was put into effect by a Labour administration. "I thought the invitation to join must have

been meant for someone, else but it was for me," said Janet.

Eighteen months later she became the BEC's first Deputy Chief Officer. BEC eventually became BTEC, which Janet left to become Director General of the Pitman Examinations Institute, that eventually became part of City & Guilds. "Eighty per cent of our Pitman candidates came from outside the UK, mainly Commonwealth countries. It was a very challenging and interesting time involving travel to most parts of the world and learning how education systems worked in so many other countries."

Meanwhile, there had been stints as secretary and chairman of the London group of the Royal Institute of Public Administration and five years on the RIPA Council.

Now retired, and having lost her husband three years ago, Janet has taken on the chairmanship and is a member of the HGS Institute Council. She looks forward to making the RA active in more areas of interest than it has been and to preparations for celebrating its centenary. "I am convinced there is a pool of talent, people of all ages but particularly among early retirees who can benefit themselves and the community by being more active participants."

## The Railway Children

Debbie Lane's production of 'The Railway Children' was a great success. It is amazing what the HGS Theatre Club can do on such a small stage; a cottage, a railway station, a tunnel and even a train. The train was truly superb. Andy Farrer, set designer, is to be congratulated. The Musker family were well represented in the band. John Musker as conductor with Gabriel and Mary on trumpet and saxophone. They, with others, made a tuneful noise.

The Theatre Group is not very strong on singers, but Ali Newell as Mother and Natalie Fernandes as Bobbie more than made up for the rest.

Bobbie's cry, "Daddy my Daddy," brought a lump to the throat. In a large cast Rusty Ashman as the Old Gentleman and John Dansey as Perks really stood out.

Emma Pleass's choreography was inventive especially the paperchase ballet. It is always a joy to see how much the children enjoy performing. They were truly delightful.

LÉONIE STEPHEN

## Centenary Spring Flower Show – The best ever?

In 1909, the year that the old age pension was introduced in the UK, the first toaster was invented, the Prime Minister was Herbert Asquith, Selfridges founded their Oxford Street store and a gallon of petrol cost one shilling, Dame Henrietta Barnett and residents of our infant Suburb started a Horticultural Society. A century later, on 21 March, HGS Horticultural Society held a special Centenary Spring Flower Show at the Free Church Hall and put on two fascinating exhibitions celebrating one hundred years of the society and also one hundred years of gardening and domesticity. A tiny separate exhibition of Britain's model plants and gardens took adults back to childhood.

Around 250 visitors came to see the Mayor of Barnet, Councillor, John Marshall open the show, cut a beautifully decorated celebration cake made by Lesley Michaelides and present gold life-membership cards to six out of the seven people who had been members of the society for 50 or more years (Margaret Greenwood, Joan Hannam, Anne Lowe, Tim Neal, and Chris and Wendy Parry. Joyce Morrison was unable to attend). The flowers on the cake looked as if they had been picked that morning, but in fact had been made out of icing by Lesley.

Almost 200 home-made teas were consumed, including by a party of 40 walkers walking from Finchley to Golders Green via the Suburb, who just

happened by. The atmosphere of excitement and reminiscence and the scent of spring flowers were palpable and the verdict of members and visitors alike was that it was probably the best show ever, entirely fitting as a celebration for Dame Henrietta's first, and now oldest, society in Hampstead Garden Suburb.

The society's centenary programme continues with many more celebrations to enjoy. Check out What's On in this issue or visit [www.hortsoc.co.uk](http://www.hortsoc.co.uk). There are two highlights unique to this 100th birthday season. One is a plant sale on the day of the

Summer Show on 13 June, when six specialist nurseries will sell an excellent selection of plants from 11am till 5pm in the grounds of the Teahouse at the top of Northway, next door to the show in the Free Church Hall.

The other is the appearance of the acclaimed Grimsdyke Brass Band from Harrow, who will entertain visitors to the Autumn Show in the Free Church Hall garden during the afternoon of 12 September, when the Great Centenary Apple Hunt will also take place (see page ?? for more details).

MARJORIE HARRIS



Cutting the cake for 100 years of Horticultural Society

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